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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOOD STAMPS PROVIDE CRITICAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE TO URBAN POOR BUT MILLIONS STILL ARE MISSING OUT, FINDS FRAC SURVEY

New York, New York, October 18, 2006 - More than \$400 million in federal food stamp benefits was left unclaimed by New York City residents in 2004, according to *Food Stamp Access in Urban America*, the Food Research and Action Center's (FRAC) latest survey of food stamp usage and hunger.

According to FRAC's Local Access Indicator (the measure used by FRAC to calculate local participation in the Food Stamp program), it is estimated that only 66 percent of the people in New York who were eligible for food stamps were actually receiving benefits. While outreach efforts are working to enroll larger numbers of eligible people, barriers to applying for food stamps still remain, including language or cultural challenges, unnecessary red tape and other administrative barriers, concern about stigma, or low-income people simply not knowing they are eligible.

"Too many families in America's cities are facing a constant struggle against hunger. While there has been an increase in food stamp participation, thanks to strong outreach efforts, there are still millions [in the U.S.] unaware they could be receiving this help that is basic to their health and well-being," said FRAC President Jim Weill.

There is evidence to suggest that food insecurity and hunger are more severe in America's urban areas like New York City (5.1 percent of principal city households experienced hunger in 2004, as compared to 3.9 percent of households nationwide). Therefore this under-participation in the Food Stamp Program not only affects the income, nutrition, and well-being of eligible but not-participating households but also affects communities that could benefit from more federal dollars in the local economy. As household food stamp expenditures become revenue for retailers, the funds cycle through the local economy generating increased business activity. According to the USDA, every \$1 in food stamp expenditure produces more than \$1.80 in economic activity.

This research as well as the work of Mayor Bloomberg's Commission for Economic Opportunity and the New York City Council all point out that the existence of poverty, hunger, and food insecurity could be obliterated in our great city and that increasing participation in the Food Stamp Program can truly aid in this fight.

FoodChange is a non-profit organization promoting nutrition, education, and financial empowerment. FoodChange's Food Stamp Call Center will assist people in New York City in determining their potential eligibility and aid them through the food stamp application process. The call center's number is 212-894-8060 or, toll-free, 1-866-366-3692.